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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE: UNHCR PLANS FOR CAMPS AND SHELTER

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 15522 AND NOTAL

[1](#)B. HUNT/SWAMY/GRENCIK EMAIL TO SA/PB 14-16 OCTOBER 2005

[1](#)1. The October 8, 2005 magnitude 7.6 earthquake in Pakistan left an estimated 3.3 million people without shelter (UN Office of Humanitarian Coordinator, October 15). Providing temporary shelter from them remains a top priority of the international assistance effort and the government of Pakistan. The United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) and the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) group is focused on establishing small temporary camps only where necessary, putting primary emphasis on providing shelter close to the destroyed homes of survivors.

CAMPS FOR EARTHQUAKE SURVIVORS

[1](#)2. The UNDAC Camp Management Cluster, led by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), received a written request on October 13, 2005 from Pakistan's Federal Relief Coordinator, Major General Farooq Ahmed Kahn, to establish camps for those left homeless by the earthquake. The UN Flash Appeal for the South Asia Earthquake contains a request for \$22 million for the UNDAC Camp Management Cluster to provide everything needed to operate camps for up to 500,000 people except food (which is included in the Food Cluster Request). UNHCR and the fourteen non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Camp Management Cluster, recognizing that camps can be magnets for those looking for assistance and become unnecessarily large, have agreed to minimize the number of camps and to aim to keep them open only for six months. The Camp Management Cluster will work with the Shelter and other UNDAC clusters to achieve this goal. To keep camp sizes small, it plans to:

-- Prevent interim displacement by delivering tents and blankets to the most remote areas possible to enable people to remain near their destroyed homes;

-- Provide tents, blankets, non-food items, and organizational assistance to spontaneous settlements;

-- Keep those camps it is necessary to establish as small as possible;

-- Work to establish and maintain in the camps Sphere standards (which set minimum levels of assistance for disaster assistance).

UN HAS NO PLANS TO ESTABLISH LARGE CAMPS

[1](#)3. UNHCR and NGO members of the Camp Management Cluster are currently completing site surveys for the small camps in Muzaffarabad, Balakot and Batagram and in other locations. Although October 14 newspaper reports referred to a Government of Pakistan (GOP) plan to create "tent cities" to house earthquake victims, the UN has received no formal request from the GOP for such camps. If asked, UNHCR will provide technical advice to GOP on establishing and operating large camps, but it will not itself take a role in management of camps in urban areas or camps located great distances from the homes of survivors.

PROVIDING SHELTER TO THOSE OUTSIDE CAMPS

[1](#)4. UNHCR is encouraged by assurances from the GOP that those in the earthquake-affected area will want to stay as close to their destroyed dwellings as possible. It has already provided 2,400 winterized tents to its NGO partners for distribution, and an additional 15,415 winterized tents and 220,000 blankets from UHCR stockpiles in Afghanistan, Turkey and Dubai are scheduled to be delivered by October 20. The Shelter Cluster is also working to provide tents to the displaced who want to remain near their homes. UNDAC and the Shelter Cluster are in the process of determining how many tents have already been delivered, how many are being shipped, and how many of them are winterized. The Shelter Cluster reports that estimates of the need for tents varies; initial estimates were that between 100,000 and 200,000 tents

would be needed, but the Shelter Cluster now estimates the number required could be as high as 600,000. As of October 15, 2005, the Shelter Cluster estimated that 15,000 tents had already been delivered and that 66,000 were in the pipeline, but stressed that these are preliminary figures and that it lacks complete information from all donors.

15. Comment: The need to shelter survivors of the earthquake is growing more acute each day, as the shift in weather conditions has left thousands exposed to the elements. Post's contacts in the Kashmiri community agree with the GOP assessment that strong cultural imperatives will make survivors extremely reluctant to abandon their land and homes. The sizable Kashmiri community in Islamabad/Rawalpindi is already housing extended family members affected by the earthquake, but will not be able to absorb the thousands of displaced survivors. Post will continue to monitor UNHCR and GOP resettlement plans as Pakistan shifts from emergency relief toward sustainable mid-term housing for the homeless.

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